



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Directors, Exceptional Children Programs  
Lead Administrators, Charter Schools  
Directors, State Operated Programs  
Directors, Private Educational Agencies

FROM: William J. Hussey, Director *WJH*  
Exceptional Children Division

RE: **2017 North Carolina Deaf-Blind Census**

It is time for the Exceptional Children (EC) Division to collect data for the 2017 Annual Census of Students with Deaf-Blindness. This report is required of states receiving federal funding. The count is a point-in-time snapshot and should reflect those individuals identified and eligible for services from the state deaf-blind project on December 1<sup>st</sup> of the current reporting period. (**Reporting period is December 2, 2016- December 1, 2017.**) Please register any child enrolled in your program on December 1, 2016.

“Deaf-Blindness means co-occurring hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes significant communication, mobility, and other developmental challenges that adversely affect and child’s access to the educational and physical environment and adversely effect a child’s educational performance. The term includes “children who are deaf-blind and have additional disabilities and those who function as deaf-blind due to a significant cognitive, medical, or processing disability.” Source: The National Center on Deaf-Blindness

The EC Division interprets this definition as “Children with *COMBINED FUNCTIONAL* vision and hearing loss which may interfere with their ability to a) communicate and interact with others in educational and/or social settings; to access information (spoken, social media, print); and b) move about safely and efficiently in familiar and unfamiliar environments.” The definition also includes individuals with documented functional loss and/or with progressive conditions such as Usher's Syndrome. The NC Deaf-Blind Project (NCDBP) serves families, teachers, and service providers of infants and toddlers, children, and young adults age birth to 21 years who have a dual sensory impairment. Children who have a vision and hearing loss are diverse. Most have some usable hearing and/or some usable vision.

Deaf-Blindness is a condition of access. Even with hearing aids and eyeglasses students may not be able to gather information as presented by the teacher or classmates. Key words may be missed. Writing on the board may not be visually clear. Missing information has a profound impact on academic success and the development of social skills. Children who are deaf-blind often do not even realize that they have missed key information or cues in the environment.

Some syndromes and conditions have a high relationship to deaf-blindness. Individuals with both a vision and hearing loss often have additional disabilities such as:

- Intellectual Disabilities (including significant intellectual disabilities)

### EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

- Multiple Disabilities – 90% of children on the national DB census had one or more additional disabilities
  - Medical/Genetic - Moebius Syndrome, Cytomeglovirus (CMV), CHARGE Syndrome, Down Syndrome
- Progressive Disorders – Usher Syndrome, Batten Disease, Dandy Walker Syndrome, Norrie Disease
- Processing Disorders – Cortical Vision Impairment, Cerebral Vision Impairment, auditory processing, auditory neuropathy
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These conditions are common to hearing and vision loss and often cause children to function as deaf-blind. Please consider children with these syndromes when completing information regarding the Annual Child Count – Deaf-Blind Census. Registration enables the State Deaf-Blind Project to offer benefits such as technical assistance, resources and training to educators, families and service providers.

The Deaf-Blind Census is conducted by the Exceptional Children Division. Submissions are made online to a secure confidential link. Please note that Deaf-Blindness does not need to be the primary or secondary area of eligibility for a child to be entered on the DB Census. In fact, 85% of the children on the NC census are listed in the area of Multiple Disabilities/Developmental Disability.

Some of the census information is required by the National Center on Deaf-Blindness for the report that is submitted to OSEP each year. Some of this information includes:

- Child Code – First and Second Letters of the Child’s First and Last Name
- Etiology
- Testing Information
- Classroom/Early Intervention Setting
- Intervener/Paraprofessional Assigned to Student
- Assistive Technology
- Hearing and Vision Loss
- Challenging Behaviors
- Other Conditions/Impairments
- Living Setting
- Part C/Part B Eligibility
- Post-Secondary College/Employment Plan

Please note that no information is included which identifies a specific child other than the Child Code.

The NCDBP also requires some additional information:

- LEA
- School name
- Teacher’s name and e-mail
- Parent contact information including address, phone number, and e-mail
- Communication modes preferred by student
- Inclusion in the American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota registration

The EC Divisions ask for additional information such as participation in IEP and literacy preferences. The census only takes about ten (10) minutes to complete if you have all the information in front of you. Please note – to be eligible for the NCDBP services, the child MUST be reported to the DB Census each year.

The NCDBP has provided workshops in building communication, transition, self-determination, IEP planning, and assessment for families and service providers. All workshops are presented at NO COST. In many cases hotel, transportation, and meals are also paid for/reimbursed by the DB Project. Attendees include parents, teachers, school administrators, speech language pathologists, adapted physical education teachers, occupation and physical therapists, and early intervention providers.

The NCDBP also provides Technical Assistance (TA) to schools, community centers, and families. Staff with expertise in evidence based instructional strategies are available to observe and provide staff with resources to improve outcomes for students who are deaf-blind. When needed, the project partners are able to provide ongoing TA.

Additional information regarding the NC Deaf-Blind Project can also be found on the following web page: <http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/deaf-blind>. The link to the 2017 DB census is: [https://ncvps.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_81VYvWECh6qIDOJ](https://ncvps.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_81VYvWECh6qIDOJ)

For your convenience, a FAQ document is also attached.

Please complete the online census for each student in your LEA who may meet the deaf-blind eligibility requirement by **April 6, 2018**.

If you have questions about the NC Deaf-Blind Project, student eligibility, or the Annual Deaf-Blind Census, please contact Dottie Snyder, Director of the North Carolina Deaf-Blind Project, at 919.807.3987 or [dorothy.snyder@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:dorothy.snyder@dpi.nc.gov).

WJH/DM/DS